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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet provides those in managerial positions with 16 practical hints concerning effective management. (For related documents, see AC 014 426-428.) (KM)

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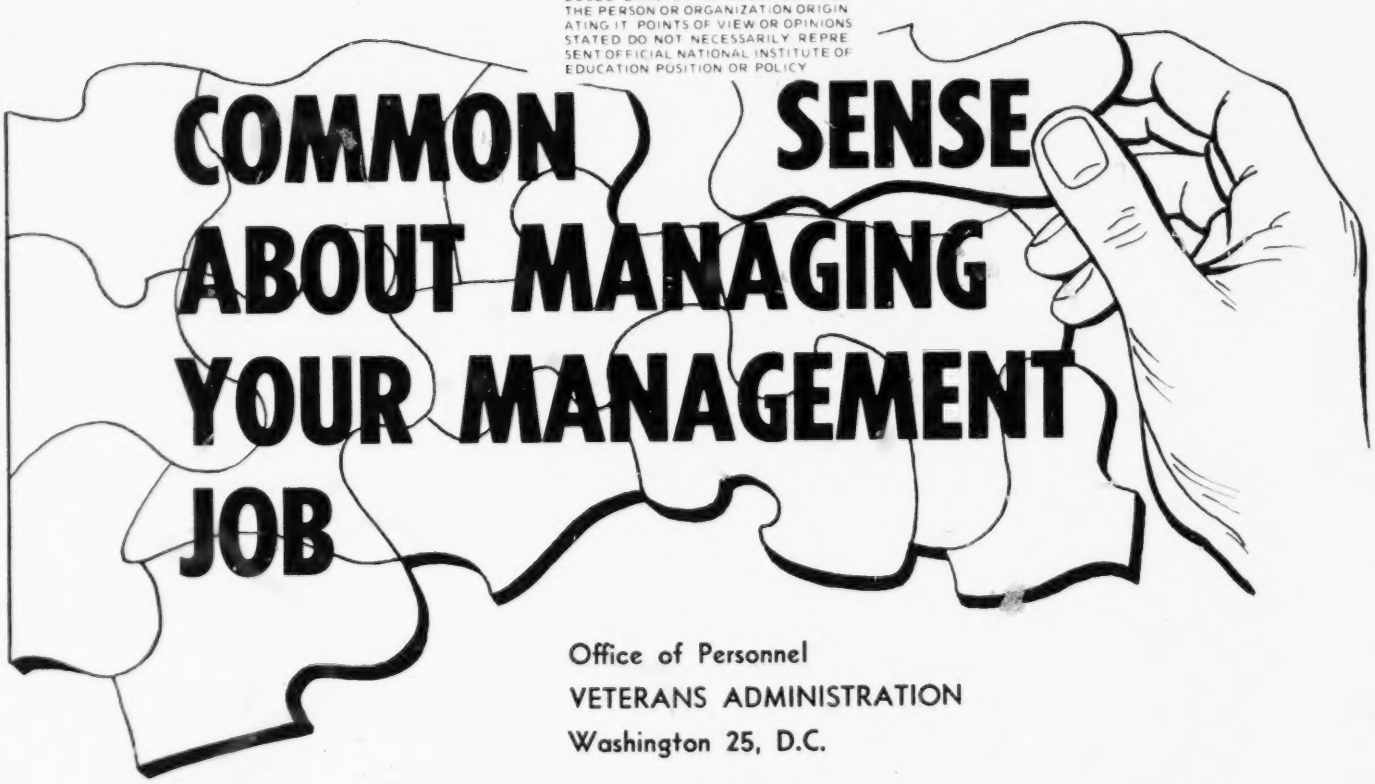
VA PAMPHLET 5–28

COMMON SENSE ABOUT MANAGING YOUR MANAGEMENT JOB



Office of Personnel
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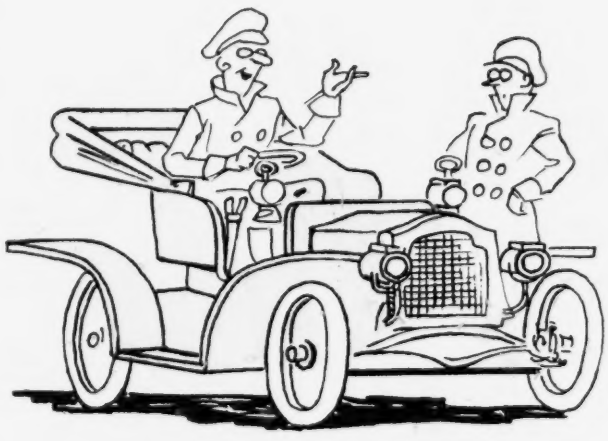
COMMON SENSE ABOUT MANAGING YOUR MANAGEMENT JOB

So you are in a management job. You are in a key position, such as Manager, Assistant Manager, service director, or division chief. To get there you have been interested in increasing your own personal efficiency and that of the people you supervise. If you hadn't been interested and if you hadn't done a good job, you wouldn't be where you are.

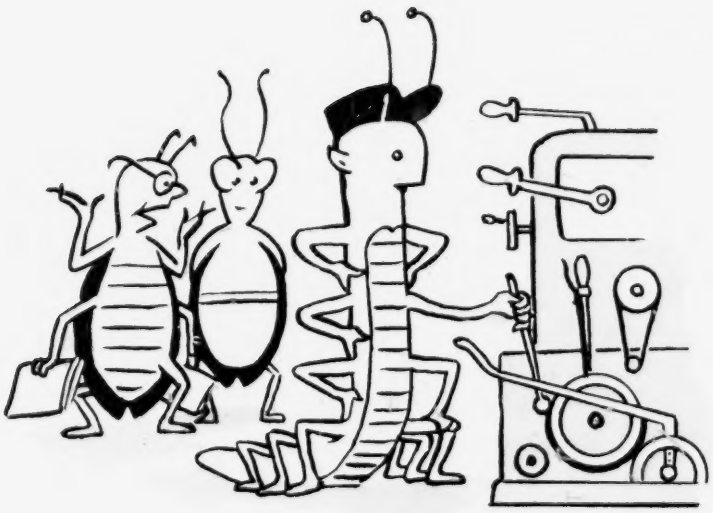
Now that you are in a management position can you be content with things as they are? Of course not, because things don't stay put; ours is a dynamic organization. And even in periods of relative stability the answer is still the same.

THERE IS NO LIMIT TO HUMAN IMPROVEMENT.



"Yes, sir. This is the last word in transportation. They'll never improve on it."

THERE'S NO MAGIC ABOUT IT



"Do you, as a management analyst, feel that there's some unused capacity there?"

It's simply that the average person works at only a modest percentage of his effectiveness. It's a rare person who works at anything like his real capacity.

If you're sure you're that person,

CONGRATULATIONS!

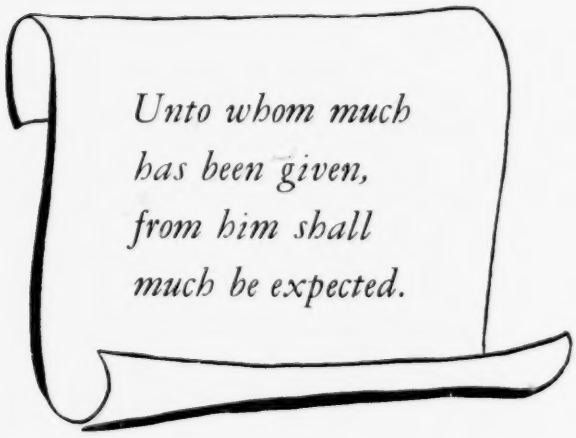
If you're not that person, then

READ ON.

It would make a world of difference overall, if each one of us increased his effectiveness by even a small percentage. And it isn't always a matter of working harder. Often when you increase your effectiveness, you don't have to work as hard.

YOU MUST SET THE EXAMPLE

Those of us who are in management positions must set the example.



One of the obligations of leadership is to give that *extra* effort which is often the difference between merely satisfactory performance and outstanding accomplishment. Learn to do better those parts of your job which have a direct effect upon others, so you will achieve the goal of being looked upon as an example to follow.

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

A "COMMON SENSE" approach to your management job can help you reach this goal.

And here is Mr. Common Sense ready to show you on the following pages some practical tips for increasing your own personal efficiency and that of the people you supervise. You are probably using most of them already.

Mind you—these are just tips. They aren't rigid rules. Sometimes you do better when you "throw away the book." Nor does this pamphlet mention all the suggestions which might be made. But these tips are the more important ones and the ones which generally do the trick.

1 HELP YOUR PEOPLE ACQUIRE A SENSE OF URGENCY

In other words, help them to increase their earnest desire to serve the veteran as promptly and as well as they themselves would like to be served.

You can't do this unless you genuinely feel it yourself. The person who lags causes others to lag. The one who zips along, when fast action is called for, encourages fast movements among his people and the others his actions affect.

Anyone can feel a sense of urgency. Just think out to a logical conclusion what delay on the part of your organization can mean:

- a compensation or pension check held up.
- hospitalization of a veteran deferred, or
- an insurance application not processed promptly.

"Little Melvin sets a fast pace for 'Follow the Leader,' doesn't he?"

2 SET UP A WORK PLAN

Chart a course so you'll know where your organization is going. Decide what *must* be done; what *ought* to be done; what *need not* be done at the time. INCLUDE DEADLINES. They help you to stay on schedule.

Planning runs through work management from start to finish—day in, day out. You have to look ahead in order to be prepared. Unless you try to foresee what the future holds for your operations, you will be constantly caught unprepared.

Planning for the future means using available facts to seek a tentative answer. There is a risk that the answer you select from among the possible alternatives may not be perfect, but taking this risk is part of your job. Of necessity, planning means taking a chance, since some of your assumptions may be wrong. Normally, you merely adjust your plans to fit the changed situation.

And, of course, it is possible that occasionally a plan may fail. Hopefully, this will happen rarely, but it may happen. The important points are to learn from such a failure, to find and eliminate the causes, and to revise the plan to eliminate the weaknesses or to choose another plan that is free of them.

Every one in a management position reports to another person. You have to get your plans accepted by him. One good way to do this is to keep him informed while you are developing them. Most people will shy away from plans sprung on them all at once.

3 GET YOUR PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN PREPARING THIS WORK PLAN

This statement may lead you to say, "But I'm in a management position. I'm supposed to make the decisions. Right?" Yes, that's right.

But there are different ways this can be done. You can make your decisions and tell your people what they are. Sometimes this is the best way, as, for example, in an emergency. You can also discuss matters beforehand with your people, either individually or as a group. This doesn't weaken your authority; the final responsibilities and decisions are still yours. And this method has many advantages—both for your people and for YOU—

- It reduces resistance to change. Plans often require doing things differently. It is almost instinctive to resist change. We get in the habit of doing things in certain ways and it is upsetting to change these habits. Involving your people in working out these changes will reduce resistance to them.

- It gets better cooperation. If your people have had a part in working out a plan, they will be more interested in seeing that it is carried out successfully.

- It uses the strength of the group. In your management position you probably are not—and can't be—an expert in all the functions of your organization. But you have experts in your group: it's just good common sense to use them.

- It is more likely to result in a sound decision. When you get other viewpoints to help guide you, you're more likely to see the "whole picture."

- It helps your people develop more feelings of responsibility for their work. *Your* problems become *their* problems.

- It can be a part of your employees' development through experience.

This type of participation can be used for many things other than planning. It doesn't have to be done formally. In fact it's best if you develop it as part of your day-to-day relationships with your people.

Like any technique, employee participation must be used properly. It doesn't mean deciding in advance and then trying to wheedle and persuade your people into thinking that this is what they wanted all along. It doesn't mean making up your mind and then asking for opinions without listening to them. These tricks will become obvious very quickly. Unless you really want the opinions of your people and really consider them when you get them—even though they differ from yours—you'll be worse off than you were to start with. If you don't use the method properly, it's better not to use it at all.

4 BUDGET YOUR TIME WISELY

- Put down on paper all the time-consuming tasks that face you.
- Decide whether they are necessary or unnecessary.
- Eliminate or delegate every task you are doing unnecessarily.
- Schedule necessary tasks by listing a specific time to start them; then estimate how long they will take.
- Allow some leeway for changing time demands and for the unexpected.
- Don't forget to schedule time for the creative, forward-moving tasks which otherwise tend to be pushed aside for routine activities directly concerned with getting out that day's work. One of the most important responsibilities of management positions is to think ahead. Leave yourself time for thinking.
- Be a clock watcher. Check on the time schedules you've set for yourself. Ask yourself, "Am I letting absorption in low-priority projects steal time from high-priority projects or from creative tasks, such as developing my staff?"

"I know I should have switched over, but I just don't have time to think and plan."

5 SAVE YOUR CHIEF'S TIME

Remember that your activities must be channeled through your chief—that is, the person to whom you report. Look for ways to save his time, as well as yours.

Find out how he operates, what he likes and doesn't like. What information does he need?

Does he prefer phone calls or face-to-face contacts? For reports does he want sketchy outlines or complete details? (Even when he wants complete details, give the basic facts first and then add the supporting material.)

Learning all you can about your chief's way of doing business will help you to anticipate his needs. Another way to save his time is to bring problems to him only after you have done all you can to solve them or when they are serious enough so that he will want to know about them immediately.

"So that's what makes the Chief tick."

6 KEEP YOUR PERSONAL WORK HABITS AS SIMPLE AND SPEEDY AS POSSIBLE

Take, for example, the question of projects and work assignments. We all have the temptation to do the easy things first and to push aside those that are touchy and complicated. The result is that the latter get delayed. *Resist this temptation.* Get into the habit of immediately deciding what priority a particular project or work assignment has. Pass this along to the people to whom you give it.

Get into the habit of doing first things first. Help your people to acquire the same habit.

Another possible problem area is the way you choose to get information to somebody. How many times do you write memos or make a time-consuming visit, when a phone call would do the trick? How often do you write a long report when a short memo would be sufficient?

"Office safety training might be difficult to do. Why do you think we should make it a crash project?"

It is a matter of choosing the method of transmitting information that best suits the particular need. In "Developing your Executive Skills" Auren Uris suggests this chart* to help you make a choice.

METHOD	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
TELEPHONE	Speed. Permits give and take of questions. Doesn't call you away from your desk.	Words and figures might be misunderstood or garbled. Usually no record of conversation.
IN PERSON	Visual. You can "show" and "explain." In many cases permits better meeting of the minds. Closer rapport.	You may have to leave your office, lose time. Time may be inconvenient to either of you. Requires spontaneous thinking.
INFORMAL NOTE OR MEMO	Brief. It can be for the record.	You don't get an immediate reply. Your memo is at the mercy of a routine delivery and the bulk of his mail.
FORMAL REPORT	Complete. Permits time for organization of material. Can be reported to others.	Sometimes requires considerable time. May make for slow reading at his end.

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7 MOVE TOWARD THE PROBLEM

Don't be the kind of person who can find an obstacle to any solution—and delights in doing so. DON'T BE AN ABOMINABLE NO-MAN!

Move toward the problem. Figure out how something can be done or how a decision which comes down to you *can* be carried out. True, the decision that comes down to you may not be the one you recommended. And it may even turn out that your idea was better. But it was someone's job to apply his best judgment and to make a decision. It's *your* job to carry it out. Don't jump to the conclusion that "it won't work." Do your best to make it work. Get up to the plate and take a good cut at the ball.

On the other hand DON'T BE A DETESTABLE YES-MAN—the sort of person who always finds that the chief's ideas are sheer perfection. The chief may be flattered for a short while, but he soon finds out that the "yes-man" is worthless to him. Without criticism the management process will be weakened.

Your knowledge and know-how are valuable to your chief and to your organization. Contribute the very best you can.

8 MAKE DECISIONS PROMPTLY

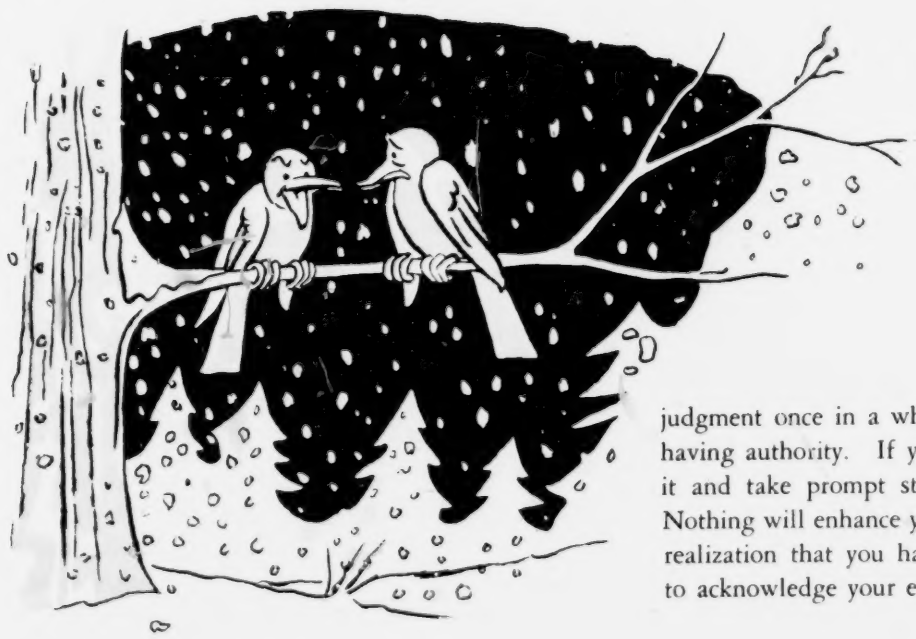
This doesn't mean falling into the trap of making snap judgments. It means thinking things through first. Use this formula for solving problems:

- Define the problem clearly.
- Get pertinent facts. Don't expect to get all the facts; nobody ever gets them all.
- Analyze the facts.
- Identify possible solutions.
- Select the best answer.

When you have decided—ACT. Leadership requires the ability to make prompt, accurate decisions after the pertinent facts are in and to carry out the decisions. The longer you delay, the greater will be the chance that they will not be carried out, and the greater will be the likelihood that you will have to change your plans.

Don't fall back on those always-available reasons—"The time isn't right yet"; "We don't have all the facts yet"; "I think this problem will solve itself." There are a lot more such reasons. Sometimes they may be valid; they always give a temporary feeling that you've done something about a tough problem. But this feeling generally wears off quickly and you find that the problem is tougher—not easier.

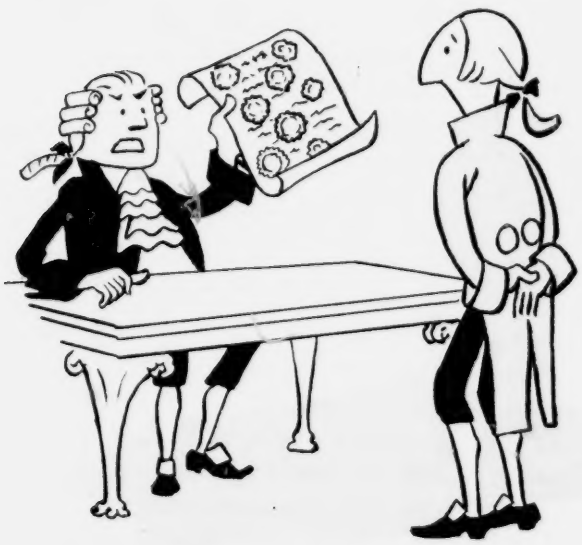
Accept full responsibility for each decision once it is made. You can't expect to avoid making errors in



"Stop nagging. We'll start south just as soon as I have all the data I need to make a decision."

judgment once in a while. It's part of the risk of having authority. If you do pull a "boner," admit it and take prompt steps to correct the situation. Nothing will enhance your reputation more than the realization that you have the strength of character to acknowledge your errors and to correct them.

9 USE PROPER AREAS OF CONSULTATION



"I can see, Enoch, that you have a lot of concurrences. But what does the document say?"

In small organizations there is generally no problem of consultation because a few men wear a number of hats each. In large organizations, such as our own, we specialize and the specialists have to consult with each other.

There is a temptation to overdo this and collect concurrences, the more the better. "We'd better talk to Bob about this. He's really not concerned, but he'll gripe if we don't get his initials." Add a few more Bobs and you have a time-consuming process. Sometimes it takes so long that, by the time a project is shepherded all the way through, it's out of date. Resist this temptation; get into the act only those people who need to get into the act.

In many cases all that is really necessary is for Bob to be informed of what has happened. You can do this by circulating copies or giving briefings at staff meetings.

We sometimes slip in passing along information of mutual interest to persons in comparable management positions—for example, fellow division chiefs. Keep them filled in—particularly about activities that require cooperation. The more they know about your operations the better prepared they will be to offer help when you need it. This also helps to create the harmony necessary for a smoothly functioning team.

Another extreme in areas of consultation is the person to whom proper channels are a bother. He goes by the unusual route, even when it's the longer and more painful one. The general result is that he, or somebody else, has to make the journey all over again.

10 COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

As was implied in the preceding page, you are a key point in the avenues of communication—an intersection through which information flows up, down, and sideways. You can promote the interchange of information, ideas, and desirable attitudes.

The job of being an effective communicator is a very important one. We tend, however, to think of it as a simple task. "Why, I just write down what I want done." Or, "I just tell them what is needed." Actually communicating *well* is quite difficult. To illustrate—when was the last time you went to a new barber and got exactly the haircut you asked him to give you?

Why should communication be difficult? For one thing, we think of it in terms of speaking and writing. But you also communicate by what you do, by what you don't do, and by the feelings and attitudes you express. Because of this you are communicating all the time, whether you plan it or not. And sometimes your actions may contradict your words.

Another reason is that words mean different things to different people. Often, there is an emotional content added to words which prevent complete transmission. Still another factor is that to be effective communication must be a two-way process. We often ignore this and assume that the person who is the receiver gets exactly what we send.

But the most important reason is that the experiences of your people strongly influence what they see and hear. Because these experiences differ from yours, they see and hear things from a different point of view.

Considering these difficulties, what can you do to be an effective communicator? These will help—

- Get to know your people so you can recognize and work with their individual differences.
- Tell your people what's doing. Tell them "why" as well as "how."
- Listen. Through this you help others to talk and you create good listeners.
- Stimulate and encourage communication. Be receptive to ideas and suggestions. As mentioned before, consult your people.
- Check to see that your communications are received and understood. Judge this understanding by actions rather than words.
- Most important of all—try to see things from the other fellow's point of view. When you try to understand his thoughts and feelings, you are better able to get "through to him." And you help to develop the permissive atmosphere and the shared confidence and understanding which are essential to effective two-way communication.

11 DEVELOP AN URGE FOR IMPROVEMENT IN YOUR OPERATIONS

Develop this urge in yourself, but, more important, encourage your people to develop it. Get them to look at your operations with a fresh, objective eye.

"I keep telling you, Cimarron, that people don't send mail by Pony Express any longer."

From this starting point, you and they can use these steps—

LOCATE THE TASK TO BE STUDIED. Be alert to recognize work situations where improvements can be made.

REVIEW THE SELECTED TASK. Examine closely how it is presently being done.

QUESTION EACH STEP—WHY, WHEN, WHO, HOW?

DISCUSS IT. As mentioned, human beings tend to resist change. You have to develop their attitudes not only to accept improved methods, but to initiate them.

TRY OUT THE NEW METHOD. Don't assume that the change will automatically succeed. It may even slow up operations. Try it out, and check to make sure that it produces results.

12 DECIDE WHAT CAN BE DELEGATED TO SOMEONE ELSE

"Yes sir, I believe in giving my men their heads and letting them handle things on their own."

Too many persons in management positions like to handle everything themselves. They feel that their subordinates wouldn't do the job as well—or they haven't found time to develop the necessary competence in their people so they can't delegate responsibilities to them—or they only pretend to delegate.

The solution is to train your people so they'll operate effectively; give them the opportunity for initiative and let them use their ingenuity.

Use these guidelines in deciding what to delegate:

- The tasks should be those that your subordinates can perform, with reasonable training.
- They should be time-consuming actions that will relieve your burdens.
- They should be duties of a more routine (rather than a policymaking) nature.
- Don't demand immediate perfection. After all, it took time for you to learn the ropes.
- Give your people the authority necessary to carry out the responsibility. Insist that they bring proposed solutions to you and not merely dump their problems in your lap. On the other hand, don't just drop duties on them. Help them until they get into the swing of things.

13 SET REASONABLE STANDARDS OF REVIEW

When you pass along to one of your people the task of doing a project, an assignment, a report, or anything else, you will often have in your mind an idea of what the end product should be like. When you review the product, be prepared for a shock. It won't be exactly the way you would have done it.

The person to whom you assigned the task is different from you. As mentioned, he has a different experience background. He probably approaches his tasks in a different way, and he doesn't have the same writing style. Also, circumstances may alter while the product is being prepared. All of these things—and others—condition the product.

"It looks like the boss is improving my memo, as usual."

No doubt you can improve the product—at least in your opinion. But hold your pen just a second. Is it worthwhile? Ask yourself these questions about the product—

Does it meet the standards of performance I have set?

Does it do the job, even though not in exactly the way I would have done it?

Will the changes I have in mind improve the product sufficiently to make worthwhile further work, delay, or retyping? Or will these changes be minor ones which, though they polish the product a little, don't affect its basic quality?

In short, am I using reasonable standards of review?

14 SET HIGH STANDARDS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

Does this contradict what you've just read about reasonable standards of review? Not at all. First, it's necessary to set high standards for your organization to accomplish the mission the way it should be accomplished. Second, most people take pride in doing a job well. You don't do them a favor by setting low standards. For the few that don't fall in this category—it's a part of your job to help them develop a pride in the work itself—in a good product or a task well done.

In addition to standards for your organization, you must decide what you expect of your people and how well they are meeting these expectations. In short, you must evaluate performance.

Here are the six basic steps you use to do this—

- Determine what the employee is expected to do. In other words, establish performance requirements.
- Discuss them with the employee and adjust them as needed.
- Observe what the employee is doing.
- Evaluate his performance against the requirements.
- Discuss the evaluation with the employee.
- Take appropriate action.

15 REWARD ENTERPRISING, ENERGETIC PERFORMANCE

There are a number of appropriate actions that you can take after performance is evaluated. Particularly important is rewarding performance of high quality. You can use the sytem of formal awards for this. But your approval is often more important than formal awards in certain situations and with certain types of employees.

And don't forget to reward enterprising, energetic performance. A man who has done 10 good things—even if one didn't turn out as expected—is better than the man who does the least possible. It's like two outfielders—one who doesn't try and doesn't cover any ground and the other who tries to field any ball he can possibly reach. The second man may not look as good as the first one at times, but he's worth a lot more to the team.

"Buck really goes back for those long ones, doesn't he?"

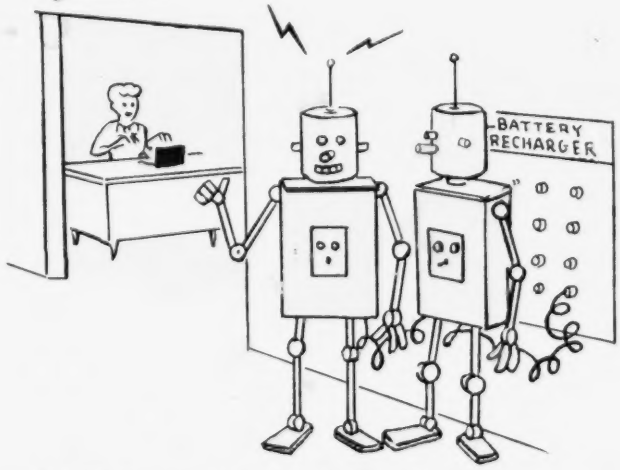
16 CREATE A CLIMATE WHICH WILL MOTIVATE YOUR PEOPLE TO DO THE VERY BEST THEY CAN

Just how do you create this type of climate? All of the things we have mentioned will help—either through directly influencing your people or through the example you set them. But isn't there something more direct—some formula, some system, some gimmick? No, there isn't, and let's hope there never will be.

People are just too complicated. You can't push a button and have them react in an exact way. Different persons react differently to the same stimulus. Even the same person will not react identically to the same circumstances at different times. Considing this, is there anything additional which you can do? Yes—

DEVELOP A SENSITIVITY TO YOUR PEOPLE!

Tune your mental antenna to their wave lengths—to their desires, needs, and aspirations. If you can do this, you will be better able to determine what will motivate a particular person at a particular time and then tie this in with the needs of your organization.



"I can't figure out how these humans operate. They don't have buttons to push."

Mr. Common Sense might sum this all up by saying—

THE WAY TO TRUE JOB SATISFACTION, THE WAY FOR US TO GET THE *MOST* OUT OF OUR JOBS IS—

TO PUT OUR *VERY BEST* INTO OUR JOBS.

IT'S A GRAND AND GLORIOUS FEELING.

Nobody trying it has ever regretted that he did. Of all the emotions a man can experience, the noblest is the consciousness that he has properly done his duty. (Winston Churchill said it, and he ought to know!)

Each of us can have that feeling. Each man in management *must* have that feeling if he's to be a happy and whole person.

IT'S UP TO US!

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